

**Child Fatality Review #08-26**  
**Region 5**  
**Pierce County**

This two-year-old Native American female died from an accumulation of fluid around her heart.

**Case Overview**

On June 3, 2008, a social worker went to the home of the deceased child to do a health and safety visit of this child. The child had been returned to her parents' care a week earlier. The child was in foster care since her birth until one week before her death. She was placed in her parents' home on an in-home dependency.

The parents told the social worker the deceased child was not feeling well, sleeping more, and not eating much. The following day the mother contacted the child's former foster parent who came over to the family home. The child had an elevated temperature, leg swelling, and leg pain. The foster parent took the family to a hospital emergency room. The child had fluid around her heart and an enlarged liver. The child was transported to Mary Bridge Children's Hospital where she received surgery. While in the recovery room the child's blood pressure dropped and her heart stopped. Attempts to revive her were unsuccessful. She passed away on June 4, 2008. The medical examiner indicated the death was related to a pericardial effusion (accumulation of fluid around the heart).

**Referral History**

On November 2, 1999, it was reported to Child Protective Services (CPS) intake the neglect of the, then five-year-old brother of the deceased child. It was alleged the family home was very dirty and had a bad smell. This referral was screened as Information Only.

On June 6, 2000, CPS intake received second hand information that the, then six-year-old, brother of the deceased child, was witnessing sex between his mother and stepfather. This referral was screened in for investigation by CPS and closed with no finding.

On August 26, 2005, CPS intake received information from hospital staff reporting the deceased child's mother was 22 weeks pregnant and tested positive for amphetamines and marijuana. There were no other concerns documented. It was unknown if she received regular prenatal care or any community resources. The doctor who treated her did not believe it was necessary to offer services. This referral was screened as Information Only.

On November 16, 2005, hospital staff reported to CPS intake that the deceased child was born prematurely on November 15, 2005. The mother tested positive for cocaine and admitted to her drug use. The child tested positive for amphetamines. The child was removed from the mother's care and placed in foster care. A dependency was established. The parents remained drug free and complied with all court orders. The child was eventually returned to their care on an in-home dependency. This CPS investigation was closed with an inconclusive finding.

On June 5, 2008, a medical examiner called CPS intake to report the death of this two-year-old child. The medical examiner stated the child died from a mass of fluid that accumulated around her heart. Her mother had taken her to a hospital because the child had a fever and swelling in her legs. The child died in the hospital after undergoing surgery. There are no allegations of neglect by the mother. This referral was screened as Information Only.

#### **Issues and Recommendations**

**Issue:** None indicated

**Recommendation:** None